

Written from the Heart.

Until about 6 months ago, I hadn't heard of the Dyslexia Australia and I must confess to having known little about dyslexia.

I was aware that folk who are dyslexic encounter difficulties with literacy as their method of processing letters and words is different. Being a fan of British actress Susan Hampshire, I recall years ago hearing her explain during an interview that learning her script proved difficult for her as she was dyslexic. Over time I heard other prominent people explaining strategies they employed to cope with the need to read and write as they were dyslexic. But I never fully grasped what it meant to be a dyslexic and although I found this topic thought provoking, I didn't delve into what it meant to be dyslexic.

Initially when a young mother approached me to ask if I would work several days a week with her 10 year old son, I was most reluctant to do so because I was enjoying the freedom of retirement after 35 years of teaching. This was *my* time— a time to embark on all those pursuits which I never had the time to undertake and enjoy before.

However, when she showed me a copy of her son's Year 5 literacy Test and when I realized the anguish she was experiencing as a mother, I realised how selfish I was being.

A visit from Brenda Baird, of Dyslexia Australia was arranged. Any apprehension that I may have felt before meeting Brenda soon paled. I found her to be a warm, encouraging and most professional lady who puts you right at ease from the very beginning. No question I asked went unanswered nor did I feel it may have been silly to ask it.

Prior to my first lesson with my new student, I did have concerns about how we were going to make models for words such as *until, each, their etc.* Believe me, there was much meal time chat with my poor husband about that topic. My apprehension was short lived as my student had worked with Brenda and later with his mum and knew exactly what to do. He was helping me it seemed which I considered such a positive. He has embraced the program as his and *gently* puts me in my place if I venture to interfere. I secretly smiled as he scolded, "Brenda said it must be my work" or "No, I can do better than that." Thankfully I am permitted to roll the clay into 'snakes' to be later used to make the words.

Not each lesson has been successful. As I began working with my new student, I realized that Mondays were not the best day to attempt anything too hard— leave that till mid-week. Our time spent together has been 1 1/2 hours per session which I find goes so quickly. When modelling the words, I soon discovered that motor bikes were out as it took far too long to

add all those bits that apparently a motor bike must have! Keep it simple!

To add variety, a bit of fun and to act as time out, we played games such as Bingo, Hangman and a version of Snakes and Ladders using the Trigger Words from the list of those we had done. This is a great way to reinforce and consolidate new or problem Trigger words.

Finding out that my student loved Tacos, we cooked them after first reading the recipe step by step. We did the same with cup cakes. Read and then eat- what fun!

I can see from working with this little boy using the Dyslexia Program that not only has his Confidence and reading improved but the parents have found a hope that at last something is working for him. He still has a long, long way to journey but sometimes the beginning step is the hardest. There's a light at the end of that long tunnel now.

For me, the reward has been tremendous. I have had the pleasure of working with a little boy who is very creative, (just love his models), has taught me lots about bikes and has shown me how a little success makes one feels so much more confident.

How can one not feel rewarded when you receive a late phone call from a mother telling you with so much excitement in her voice that her little boy has actually selected and read a book to his young brother all on his own volition.

My lingering regret will always be that my student and I did not start working together so much sooner. But a start has been made andBrenda is just a phone call.

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